United Nations DP/2012/9

Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund and the United Nations Office for Project Services

Distr.: General
4 April 2012

Original: English

Annual session 2012
25-29 June 2012, Geneva
Item 4 of the provisional agenda
Human Development Report

Update on *Human Development Report* preparations and consultations

1. Preparation of the global *Human Development Report* is guided by resolution 57/264, in which the General Assembly reaffirmed the Report's editorial independence as well as the importance of consultations with Member States. In the resolution the Assembly also invited the UNDP Executive Board to include a separate agenda item on the *Human Development Report* in its annual workplan, and in its decision 2011/12, the Board called upon UNDP and the Human Development Report Office (HDRO) to "ensure full implementation" of the General Assembly resolution, including by taking steps to "further improve the consultation process . . . in an inclusive and transparent manner."

2. The present briefing note for the 2012 annual session of the UNDP Executive Board describes the key findings of the 2011 *Human Development Report*, the global reception of the Report, the use of the Report by UNDP in the process of informing the preparatory processes for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, to be held in Rio de Janeiro, from 20 to 22 June 2012 (Rio+20), including through a Global Human Development Forum which took place in Istanbul on 22-23 March. The note outlines the development process for the 2012 Report; it describes the enhanced efforts to strengthen dialogue with Member States, including on statistical aspects of the Report. A description of the 2012 *Human Development Report* theme concludes the note. The Director of the Human Development Report Office will provide further updates on the 2012 Human Development Report at the annual session of the Executive Board.

The 2011 *Human Development Report*

3. The 21st report in the series, entitled "Sustainability and Equity: A Better Future for All," followed organically from the 2010 HDR review of long-term development trends and challenges, and was conceived as one of the key UNDP contributions to the Rio+20 global dialogue on sustainable development. The 2010 Report had documented enormous progress in human development over the past several decades—but noted some critical caveats: income growth has been associated with deterioration in key environmental indicators, and the distribution of income has worsened in much of the world, even with the narrowing of gaps in health and education achievement.

Please recycle

4. Using human development index (HDI) projections with different environmental variables through 2050, the 2011 Report warned that the global HDI would be 8 per cent lower than a baseline forecast in an "environmental challenge" scenario that captures the adverse effects of global warming on agricultural production, on access to clean water and improved sanitation and on pollution. Under an even more adverse "environmental disaster" scenario, which envisions vast deforestation and land degradation, dramatic declines in biodiversity and accelerated extreme weather events, the global HDI would fall 15 per cent below the projected baseline, with gains entirely halted or even reversed in low-HDI countries.

5. The projections suggested further that the most disadvantaged people bear and will continue to suffer the most severe repercussions from environmental deterioration, even though they contribute little to the problem. Yet a number of countries have achieved significant progress both in the HDI and in equity and environmental sustainability.

6. The Report made use of the multidimensional poverty index to highlight how the most disadvantaged people carry a double burden of deprivation. More vulnerable to the wider effects of environmental degradation, they must also cope with threats to their immediate environment posed by indoor air pollution, dirty water and unimproved sanitation.

7. The large disparities across people, groups and countries that add to the large and growing environmental threats pose massive policy challenges. But the Report also saw a cause for optimism while stressing the urgency to take action at all levels. In many respects the conditions today are more conducive to progress than ever — given innovative policies and initiatives in some parts of the world. At the local and national levels, the Report stressed the need to bring equity to the forefront of policy and programme design and to exploit the potential multiplier effects of greater empowerment in legal and political arenas. At the global level, it highlighted the urgent need to seek new sources of finance to fund climate change adaptation and mitigation and to avert other environmental threats, while strengthening the representation of disadvantaged countries and groups in accessing these new sources of funding.

Launch and reception

8. The then newly elected Prime Minister of Denmark, Helle Thorning-Smith, hosted the global launch of the 2011 HDR on Sustainability and Equity on 2 November in Copenhagen, where the UNDP Administrator presented the main findings of the Report, which were further elaborated by the lead author, Jeni Klugman, with the incoming director of the Human Development Report Office, Khalid Malik.

9. Subsequently, the Report was presented and discussed at regional and national events with the active participation of heads of State and other senior officials in more than 100 countries. The Associate Administrator presented the Report at international events in Brussels, hosted by the European Union; in Accra, at the regional launch organized by the Regional Bureau for Africa; in Abu Dhabi, at a regional launch sponsored by the Regional Bureau for Arab States, in New York at the Asia Society, with Rajendra Pachauri, the chairperson of the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. The Director-General of UNIDO hosted a presentation of the Report in Vienna. The report was also presented at an international gathering of environmental scientists at the conference entitled Planet under Pressure, which was held in London from 26 to 29 March.

Media impact of the 2011 Report

10. The 2011 Human Development Report generated headlines around the world, with wide coverage in major news organizations, including all the international wire services and most of the world's most influential daily newspapers, plus scores of national radio networks and a growing array of global, regional and national blogs and news websites.

Most international media stories highlighted the Report's "Sustainability and Equity" forecasts and analysis; national media in developing countries focused primarily on their own HDI rankings, though they also gave wide coverage to the findings of the report, looking especially at specific regional issues covered in the report. More than 2,000 separate news articles from virtually all countries were collected through web searches by UNDP communications officers worldwide (for more information, see HDRO website http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/Press_HDR_2011_2Nov-15Dec.pdf).

11. Blogs and Internet news services also covered the report extensively, from influential regional web services, such as AllAfrica.com and Gulf News to several online features in *The Guardian*, *The Economist*, and *The New York Times*. The multilingual website and many language editions of the HDR broadened the global Internet audience for the Report, with a record 3.9 million visitors and 1.3 million downloads of the Reports in 2011. The Report was available on the website in the 6 official languages of the United Nations plus 10 other languages this year, including Hindi for the first time.

Recent initiatives to stimulate policy debate on HDR recommendations

12. As an innovation and effort to strengthen the policy impact of the HDRs, the Human Development Report Office is organizing a Global Human Development Forum to review the HDR findings and analysis with high-level stakeholders, including at ministerial levels, and policymakers, opinion leaders, experts and representatives of civil society and the corporate sector on an annual basis.

13. The 2012 Global Forum took place in Istanbul, on 22-23 March, hosted by the Government of Turkey with financial support by the Government of Denmark. The Forum considered a series of critical aspects of the 2011 HDR, including the greening of human development, the imperative of a social contract for achieving equity and sustainability, the mobilization of innovative finance, the assessment of human progress and opportunities for building coalitions for change. It concluded with the "Istanbul Declaration: Towards an Equitable and Sustainable Future for All", which called for a new vision comprising the three dimensions of sustainable development that puts people at the centre of development, and identified social inclusion, protection and equity, the empowerment of women, good governance and additional resources as critical elements in a new vision.

14. HDRO is also taking initiatives to develop curricula and strengthen teaching on human development at leading academic institutions around the world, use social media and other tools to build partnerships and reach out to policymakers and opinion leaders to stimulate a global dialogue on human development.

Selecting and developing the 2012 HDR theme

15. The process of selecting the theme for the 2012 Human Development Report began in August 2011 through a series of consultations with policymakers, and development experts and practitioners, including United Nations Resident Coordinators, using both electronic networks (HDRnet and RRnet), and bilateral and larger meetings. Three interconnected themes were presented for consideration: (a) the implications for human development, and global governance from the rise of large developing economies and experiences of other emerging economies ('the rise of the Global South'); (b) the role of the State in promoting human development; and (c) shaping a human development framework for the post-2015 global development agenda.

16. The initial rounds of consultations showed strong support for all three themes, recognizing their interrelationship, but suggested "the rise of the Global South" as particularly timely, while also pointing to an important role for HDRO in inserting a human development perspective into the emerging debate on the post-Millennium Development Goal 2015 agenda.

17. With the 2012 HDR, the Human Development Report Office is seeking to strengthen its continuing efforts to systematically engage with policymakers, leading academics and other opinion leaders in Member States through consultations in all regions. Each major consultation includes a standing agenda item on the measurement of human progress. A list of the consultations that have occurred or are planned to date is provided in the annex to the present document (see also HDRO website) and is provided to member States at informal briefings. The consultation programme includes:

(a) Meetings of the 2012-2013 advisory panel. The panel is comprised of leading development thinkers and policymakers, representing all regions and two United Nations bodies (for a list of members, see http://hdr.undp.org/en/contacts/about/advisory).

(b) Meetings drawing on regional representation of policymakers and development experts in Addis Ababa (Africa), Bonn (Europe/international), Colombo (South Asia), Tokyo (East Asia), which have been planned in conjunction with hosting donor and country offices. A consultation was also held during the Annual Meeting of the Human Development and Capability Association on September 2011 in The Hague;

(c) Bilateral meetings with policymakers also took place on a number of occasions, including in Beijing, Copenhagen, The Hague, Havana, Islamabad, London and Paris and at the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development;

(d) Meetings with statisticians from the United Nations regional commissions for Latin America and the Caribbean and West Asia;

(e) Consultations to review emerging findings are also being planned in Brasilia (Latin America) and with the European Union policymakers in Brussels, as well as in conjunction with the annual meeting of the UNDP Civil Society Advisory Committee.

18. Following previous years' procedures, a set of three informal briefings with Executive Board members are also scheduled – in addition, an informal briefing of member States was also organized in mid-December 2011 to present the fundamental principles of human development and measurements. These briefings provide valuable opportunities to review the efforts under way to strengthen the dialogue with member States and increase the transparency and understanding of how data sources and indices are calculated.

19. On 15 February 2012, the HDRO Director presented the theme, the planned background research and schedule for developing the HDR. At the second meeting, scheduled for early May, the office will report on efforts to strengthen the statistical content of the Report. As the third instalment of informal briefings, HDRO will organize meetings with the regional groupings to deepen the dialogue and consider region-specific feedback and initiatives. The office has also been encouraging representatives of the United Nations permanent missions and capitals to meet with office staff regarding either the theme or broad outlines of the upcoming Report, or to discuss more specific statistical concerns.

Strengthening the statistical content of HDRs and human development measurement

20. In January 2012 HDRO organized an expert meeting to examine issues and challenges related to the Measurement of Human Progress, including a review of the Report's human development indices. Among the participants was Nobel Laureate Amartya Sen, who has played a significant role in shaping the HDI and related poverty measurements. The group discussed strengths and weaknesses of the Report's current composite indices, and scope for further developments, including consideration of a measurement of sustainability alongside or within the HDI, but recommended that the

indices used in the 2010 and 2011 reports remain methodologically unchanged for the 2012 report. HDRO plans to commission a group of external experts to undertake an in-depth review of the indices and direct their further refinements.

21. A statistical advisory panel for the HDR was constituted for 2012-2013, with the 14 members drawn from heads of national statistical offices (9 members represent developing country member States), and international organizations, as well as leading experts on measurement. The panel held a day-long meeting on 25 February 2012 to review the proposed tables for the 2012 Report and the efforts to secure the widest possible coverage with the HDI, including the principles for estimation where data are missing. The panel commended HDRO for the efforts made to accommodate the recommendations made by the Statistical Commission and in liaising with national statistical offices and international data providers.

22. The panel agreed with the decision by HDRO to update the indices presented in the 2011 HDR without introducing any changes to their formulas or indicators, to clearly mark the provenance and date of data used for the multidimensional poverty index, and to do the necessary estimation of missing indicators in close collaboration with the concerned countries. The panel also welcomed an initiative to include a "state of human development" overview and description of major trends in the indicators as an introduction to the statistical tables in the Report.

23. In keeping with the practice begun in 2011, HDRO will send letters to national statistical offices, including through the permanent missions to the United Nations, advising them about the international data sources that will be used to calculate the Human Development Index and related indices slated to appear in the 2012 Report, and urging them to provide the most recent data to the international organizations mandated to collect them The communication will also include a calendar with deadlines for when international data will be obtained from the source agencies, an advanced notice on needs to estimate missing data, and a final notice to countries for which the HDI could not be computed because of missing two or more of the HDI components.

24. At the forty-third session of the UN Statistical Commission, HDRO reported on new procedures introduced in the interest of complete transparency and effective engagement with the statistical community. In its decision 43/114, adopted unanimously on 2 March 2012, the Commission:

(a) Welcomed the report of UNDP on statistics of human development, addressing the concerns expressed by the Commission at its forty-second session, in 2011;

(b) Noted with satisfaction the steps the Human Development Report Office had taken to improve consultation, communication and transparency in their processes with member States in the context of the preparation of the 2011 Human Development Report;

(c) Urged HDRO to continue its constructive engagement with National Statistical Offices in order to address some remaining issues, including among others (i) the use of non-official or outdated data; (ii) the provision of sufficient lead time to respond to communications from HDRO on data used; and (iii) technical issues involved in calculation.

The 2012 Human Development Report

25. The 2012 HDR assesses the new dynamics of global relations resulting from the accelerated growth of some countries from the Global South and analyses the implications for national human development paths and international governance structures. The Report's core contribution rests in assessing these new dynamics of global relations from the human development perspective and placing people at the

centre (i.e., their implication for the lives of people, social equity and democratic governance). Similarly, it provides guiding principles to shape collective action that can accelerate and sustain human progress in the twenty-first century.

26. The report recognizes that the role of the Global South is already central to explaining current global progress and will become increasingly important for explaining the prospects for any further advances in human development, especially along the critical axes of social equity, environmental sustainability and social integration. Moreover, the Report recognizes that there are certain common features that some rapidly emerging countries from the South present, namely, an important role of the State, active engagement with global markets, the adaptation of greener alternatives of production and consumption, among others.

27. The defining objectives of the Report are to thoroughly understand the significance of the rapid and vast changes that are taking place in the world today; identify the nature of the development strategies that have led to the current remarkable success of major emerging economies; explore the role of social integration in human development; and trace out the projections of the likely challenges confronting further human development and global governance structures. The idea is to outline a roadmap of the viable development paths for the continuing future progress of the Global South and that of other developing countries.

In conclusion

28. The Executive Board recognized in its February 2011 decision that the *Human Development Report* "is an important tool for raising awareness about human development around the world." The Human Development Report Office remains committed to the tradition of promoting awareness about human capabilities and 'placing people at the center of development', and to using its research to stimulate informed policy debate and public understanding of human development progress and challenges.

Annex

Meetings with experts, officials of UNDP, Governments and other stakeholders in the preparation of the 2012 Human Development Report
(As of 8 March 2012)

Event	Location	Date
Informal consultation on report themes organized with HD Capability Association	The Hague,	5 September 2011
Informal consultation on report themes organized with German United Nations Association and German Development Institute on the occasion of the International Workshop on the Post-2015 agenda	Bonn	24 November 2011
First Advisory Panel meeting on HDR 2012	New York,	25 January 2012
Conference on Measuring Human Progress	New York	26 January 2012
South Asian Regional Consultation on HDR 2012	Colombo	30-31 January 2012
Human Development Round Tables, meeting with government officials and the Mahbub Ul Haq Human Development Centre	Islamabad	6 February 2012
First Executive Board informal consultation on HDR 2012	New York	15 February 2012
First Statistical Advisory Panel meeting on HDR 2012	New York	25 February 2012
Discussions with National Statistical Offices affiliated with the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean	New York	27 February 2012
The UN Statistical Commission – agenda item on HDI	New York	28 February 2012
Discussions with National Statistical Offices affiliated with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia	New York	1 March 2012
East Asian Consultation on HDR 2012 and HDR 2013 organized with the Japan International Cooperation Agency Research Institute and UNDP-Tokyo	Tokyo	13 March 2012
Consultation with the UNDP Civil Society Advisory Committee	New York	23 or 24 May
Latin American Regional Consultation	to be confirmed	Spring 2012
Informal consultation to review emerging findings in HDR 2012 at European Commission (to be confirmed)	Brussels	Spring 2012
Second informal consultation of the Executive Board on HDR 2012 including statistics	New York	9 May 2012
Third informal briefing of the Executive Board – by regional groupings	New York	June 2012(to be confirmed)
2012 annual session of the Executive Board	Geneva	28 June